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TAGS: PREL PTER PGOV PINR SA

SUBJECT: MFA OFFICIAL APOLOGIZES FOR PRINCE BANDAR BIN SULTAN'S 9/11 COMMENTS

REF: SECSTATE 152825

Classified By: Ambassador Ford Fraker for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (S/NF) On November 6, the DCM met with Doctor Prince Turki Saud al-Kabeer, the Deputy Minister for Political Affairs and International Organizations and the highest ranking MFA official in-country, to deliver reftel remarks regarding recent comments by Secretary General of the Saudi National Security Council Prince Bandar bin Sultan stating that the USG could have prevented 9/11 if it had consulted with the Saudis in a "credible" way. The Foreign Minister is currently traveling with King Abdullah in Europe.

¶2. (S/NF) Prince Turki responded to the protest demarche by saying, "We are sorry." He added that Prince Bandar's comments did not mean to harm the US-Saudi relationship. He called Bandar's remarks a "slip of the tongue," noting that these comments "should never have been made." "The Prince's comments surprised us all," said Prince Turki. He stated that Saudi Arabian Government (SAG) decision makers had not cleared the Prince's comments in advance. He added that if the SAG had possessed information about the 9/11 attacks, it would have passed the information along to the USG immediately.

¶3. (S/NF) The Prince also used the meeting to reiterate his past statements that "terrorists are deranged" and to stress that education, moderate clerics/mosques, and strong family structures are needed to combat terrorism. He said "all three are equal in importance." In particular, he noted that his school age children in Saudi Arabia are now being taught that terrorism and extremism are "evil."

FRAKER